

**Chair's Summary of the
sixth informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE Multilateral
Environmental Agreements and the Committee of Environmental Policy**

held on 13 April 2015 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva

The sixth informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the Committee of Environmental Policy (CEP) was chaired by Mr. Massimo Cozzone, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention.

The key objectives of this meeting were to: (a) Continue the discussion on how to ensure adequate and predictable financing of activities under the MEAs, (b) further exchange ideas on possible involvement of MEAs in the next Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference; (c) exchange experience on the opening of MEAs to countries beyond the UNECE region; (d) and to continue the discussion on identifying and applying potential synergies between the MEAs.

1. Opening

The Chair opened the meeting. Mr. Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary of UNECE welcomed the participants (see [annex I](#) for the list of participants). He emphasized the importance of the MEAs in delivering on the post-2015 development agenda and the SDGs. In order to strengthen the work of the secretariat in support of the MEAs and to respond to increased needs, a more predictable and equitable funding mechanism needs to be shaped, while at the same time increasing the efficiency of the secretariat. The paper on “Secretariats to ECE MEAs – the way forward” was developed to achieve a more sustainable and predictable funding for the MEAs. A more sustainable funding scheme should also allow front-runners to champion certain topics. Mr. Bach explained that based on the inputs by the Conventions, modifications to the paper would be undertaken. It would then be presented to EXCOM in May or later, depending on whether more discussions were needed.

2. Discussion on the financial arrangements under MEAs and the workload of the secretariat and proposed arrangements

Mr. Marco Keiner, Director of the UNECE Environment Division, presented the paper (see above) in more detail. He emphasized that the paper was to be seen as a living document, going through an iterative consultative process to reach a common understanding, and, eventually a solid system of funding. The next step would be to define core and non-core activities. Ideally, the work plans for the MEAs would already identify the source of funding to make sure that activities are adequately funded.

In the discussions that ensued, the following overall comments were raised:

- The paper should be discussed with all Parties to the Conventions, not only by the Bureaux;
- The introduction of mandatory contributions may be difficult, as well as the use of the UN Scale of Assessment;
- As the Conventions seem to function differently, the definition of core and non-core activities might not be the same across the MEAs;
- Some solutions suggested in the paper could be implemented on a smaller scale (e.g. one Convention) on a pilot basis in order to demonstrate their usefulness and applicability.

More detailed comments were also raised at and as a follow-up to the meeting. As next steps after the meeting, an updated version of the paper containing these comments would be posted on the website ‘Informal networks’: <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/informal-networks.html>. This version of the paper would be presented to EXCOM in May. Further internal discussions would be held in

the secretariat on the definition of core activities, the results of which would be shared with the group well in advance of the next meeting in October 2015.

3. Possible involvement of MEAs in the 8th Efe Ministerial Conference

The secretariat presented on the preparations for the 8th Efe Ministerial Conference in Batumi, Georgia, from 6 to 8 June 2016. The conference will have two main themes: 'Greening the economy in the pan-European region' and 'Improving air quality for a better environment and human health'. The conference will also feature a high-level segment on ESD. There will be several outcomes, such as a ministerial declaration, a chair's summary, side-events, roundtables, initiatives and a pan-European strategic framework for greening the economy, among others. Background documents are currently being prepared.

The Air Convention informed that it will contribute to the thematic background paper on air quality, present the Convention's assessment report and work on an initiative 'Action for Cleaner Air', to possibly be launched at a side-event in Batumi. To present these inputs to the CEP and to negotiate language on air quality in the ministerial declaration, the secretariat encouraged the Convention to participate in the CEP 21 meeting.

It was also suggested to link more closely to the SDGs and their relevance at the regional level.

4. Opening of MEAs to countries beyond the UNECE region – update and exchange of experience

The Air Convention informed that cooperation beyond the UNECE region was already happening on the scientific level. Some countries have shown interest in the experience of the Air Convention, but so far, Parties to the Convention have been hesitant to opening the instrument beyond the region.

The Water Convention informed that countries outside the UNECE region are ready to join; however, three Parties still need to ratify the amendment for the opening to become operational.

The Espoo Convention informed that the amendment has entered into force; however, it still needs to be ratified by 15 countries that were Parties when the amendment was adopted. The issue will be discussed at the fourth meeting of the Working Group on EIA and SEA at the end of May 2015, where Parties would, among others, consider options to facilitate the entry into effect of the first amendment as soon as possible.

The Industrial Accidents Convention informed that the last COP discussed the possibility of opening up and further discussions will take place in the context of amending the Convention.

5. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 26 October 2015. The agenda of the meeting may include updating the paper on "Towards enhanced cooperation of UNECE MEAs: Informal guidance". Comments and modifications should be submitted to the secretariat by the end of June. The secretariat will then compile the comments and circulate an updated version to Chairs.

Chairs were asked to suggest other items for the agenda of the next meeting.

6. AOB

The Vice-Chair of the Aarhus Convention proposed to allow observers to the informal meetings of the MEAs Chairs. The proposal was accepted by the Chairs of the other MEAs. An invitation to the European ECO-Forum, a network of environmental NGOs in the region, will be sent asking to nominate a representative. It was also suggested inviting representatives of ESD or THE PEP to the Chairs' meeting, if it is of relevance.

Annex I

List of participants



Informal Meeting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the 5 MEA's and their protocols

Geneva, 13 April 2015

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